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Book 575

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America's Salutation.

March 4, 1881.

THE WHITE HOUSE.

An Epitaph.

Sept. 23, 1881.

ROTUNDA OF THE CAPITOL.

The Oak Tree.

Sept. 26, 1881.

Entombed, Cleveland, Ohio.

America's Salutation.

The President.



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Our Nation's Chief! with honors that demand

The highest effort of recording pen,

We hail you, and salute you, as we stand

Proudly before you, free and free-born men ;

And to your wise devotion we consign

Our Union's welfare and its grand design !

Not with the royal purple we enfold,

Nor shining sceptre in your hand we place ;

Your diadem is not a crown of gold,

But the free suffrage of a loyal race.

Born of the People!—chosen for your worth !

THAT makes the fairest majesty on Earth !

Between the waves that wash our eastern lines,

And those that flash the sunsets in the west,

Between the boundaries marked by northern pines,

And where the cocoa lifts the fruitful crest,

Your arm extends,—nor circumscribed by these,

But where our commerce rides the common seas.

How grand the view! Greece, in her proudest day,

Such wealth of empire never could present,

Nor Rome, before her downfall and decay.

Such realm, so bounded, of such vast extent;

Nor worthier men, of higher, nobler stamp,

In council eloquent, and brave in camp.

On every hand behold our smiling homes,

By wife-bright firesides happy eyes increase :

Hear, in wide forests and in graceful domes,

The pæan hymn, the hopeful words of peace.

Myths, blighting mists no longer thoughts enthral,

And rich forgiveness overmantles all.

See wealth accruing ; every art advance ;

States multiply ; imperial cities grow :

See Learning lead and Science couch the lance,

All tyranny to meet and overthrow ;

And, wise in scope, conception and in clause,

Behold our Nation's Charter and her Laws.

What higher hope can fire the human mind,
Or loftier aim or impulse be desired
Than this : that man his destiny may find
In sovereign right ? O, dream of men inspired !
Idea sceptred ! The supremer truth,
Late-born, by wise men nurtured in its youth !

Prophetic vision sees the coming day,
With fairer light to beautify the world,
When man shall rise superior to his clay,
And every race shall hail the flag unfurled,
Which thou, O Country ! hast exalted high,
With hopes and promises that cannot die,

We say not : Wear our country's honors well,—

And prophecy were vain and useless guess.

O, Chief! your record things of honor tell,

And counsel would an anxious thought confess,

Take, then, our Country's diadem, and feel

All that our higher hope cannot reveal!

J. M. S.

AN EPIGRAM.

*Written in the Rotunda of the Capitol, where the body of
the dead Garfield was lying in state.*



Alas! poor clay! Couldst thou not keep the soul
Confided to thee, for a few more years,
That nature peacefully might yield control,
And heaven receive him without angel's tears?

Didst thou not know his high, imperial worth,—
How from the nation's level he arose
To place among the grandest men of Earth,
Winning high friendships and the love of foes?

Foes, he had none! save in that generous strife
Where only talent precedence may claim,
Where the great struggle of a worthy life
Is: who shall best sustain an honored name.

Friends?—From the farthest lands a wailing comes,
Where the sad tidings, lightning-borne, have sped;
Alike in Afric wastes and Asian homes,
They twine the wreaths of cypress for our dead!

The queenliest spirit that our earth enshrines—
Empress, descendant of a race of kings
Illustrious in a hundred branching lines,
A gift of emblem flowers—chaste tribute—brings.

But never rested crown on saintlier brow
Than her's, who hither comes—a widowed dove!
Retire! for Garfield's wife to Garfield now
Tells the sweet story of their wedded love!

Dull ears! Forever closed those sunnlight eyes!

 Cold lips! All nerveless the caressing hand!

Adieu! And weeping angels waft her sighs,

 Like mourning incense, to the tearless land.

Approach once more, in solemn awe, and read

 A history page, graved in the minds of men:

Truth was his God, and loyalty his creed;

 Faith winged his words and justified his pen.

Wisdom, he taught, is wisely to do well;

 The higher need is well the need to gain;—

What tongue more eloquent a fact to tell?

 What mind to grasp and stronger to retain?

How brave the faith that deeds exemplified,

Tell, O ye records of his works and ways!

Ever was moral gold severely tried,

But none, than his, came purer from the blaze!

Gone, in his manhood, when his splendid powers

Gave high assurance of a grand career;

Gone, in the sunlight of his Summer hours,

Like blighted promise of a harvest year!

Dead! Cold and stark he lies beneath our gaze!

Yet love beholds him present with us now,

Where, through the mists of grief, we see the rays

That weave an aureola round his brow.

He is not dead! Such men can never die!

They sink awhile beneath the whelming waves,
Then rise to lofty heights in history,

And live when even fame forgets their graves.

O stately dome! so rich in heaven's own hues,

Here lies another great and worthy one,

High recognition thou couldst not refuse,

Thou apotheosis of Washington.

And we, and all who after come will say,

While gazing at the glory pictured there,

The grand immortals, from his martyr clay,

Received our Garfield to their tender care.



Heaven! he is thine. We give a worthy gift,

For nought more precious could our love bestow;

And pride will think, and thought the soul uplift:

He was too noble for the life below.

Ye shades! now gazing through the years of time

Unknown, unnumbered save by epochs grand,

Say, as ye herald him to spheres sublime:

A faithful son, beloved of fatherland.

Adieu, great Chief! Rest thou in peace. Farewell!

Ages will pause beside these ashes cold,

Listening the Present to the Future tell

Thy worthy deeds, till Earth and all grow old!

J. M. S.

The Oak Tree.

Comparison.



Where the landscape lay bleak in the sweltering air,

And the kine in the Summer day panted,
Lo! an oakling sprang up on the hillside bare,

From a germ that the tempest had planted.
Full of vigor it grew, in the hard, sterile soil—

Mother rude for such generous moulding—

Strong and shapely, in struggle with danger and toil,

While its branches were slowly unfolding.

When maturing, what excellent worth it displayed

On the hillside, erstwhile bleak and dreary:

To the strong and the weak it gave shelter and
shade.

And a carpet of green for the weary.

For the toiler, returning at close of the day,

Through the vale where the light was declining,
It was beacon and guide to his home on the way,

While its crown in the sunlight was shining.

Thus benignant, while seasons swept onward, it stood

Like a sentinel true to his duty ;

And the grasp of the storm-wind gave strength to its
wood,

And its leaves caught from sunshine their beauty.

But a cloud, charged with fury encircled its head,

And the wild, vagrant lightning descended ;

When the tempest was over, the oak tree was dead,

Shattered, prostrate, its great purpose ended !

Noble Garfield ! struck down in thy grandeur so soon,

Like the beautiful oak of my story,

Thine the honors of morning, the laurel of noon,

Thine the crown of America's glory.

Ah ! the shock of the spoiler who, who can withstand !

Who can read the day-noon in the morning ?

Now entombed, lowly lyeth the pride of our land,

Like that oak once the hillside adorning !

J. M. S.



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